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AUTHOR	Goddu, Roland; Chappel, Marcia
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ABSTRACT

This document gives a brief overview of aspects involved in developing resource centers for education personnel. The paper is divided into five sections: (1) an introduction, describing the characteristics of resource centers in general; (2) place, a brief discussion of physical organization; (3) program components, describing the necessity of stating in clear terms what the resource center will provide in the way of services and how it intends to do it, the questions of funding, organization of resource files, and provision of training programs; (4) a brief survey of the various aspects of governance; and (5) concluding statements. Reprints are included of four articles: (1) "An Early Childhood Resource Center," Marilyn J. Ateyo, CHILDHOOD EDUCATION, February 1975, pp. 204-7; (2) "Regional Service Centers: Impetus for Change," Lucile Estell, EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, March 1972, pp. 543-5; (3) "Teacher Centers: An Outline of Current Information," Lorraine Poliakoff, JOURNAL OF TEACHER EDUCATION, Fall 1972, pp. 389-97; (4) "Resources, Teachers, and Designers," Jack Walton, in SUPPORTING THE LEARNING TEACHER: A SOURCE BOOK FOR TEACHER CENTERS, Marilyn Hapgood, Ed., New York, Agathon Press, 1975, pp. 214-17. (MB)

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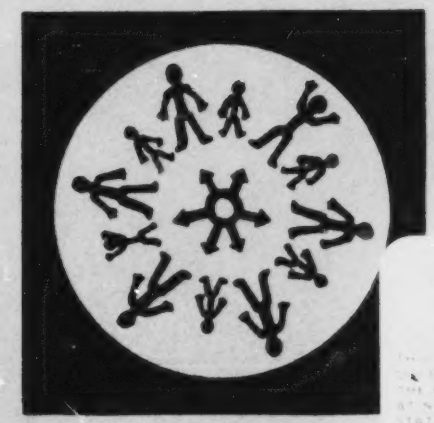
ORGANIZING A REGIONAL OFFICE

RESOURCE CENTER FOR EDUCATION PERSONNEL



Prepared by:

Roland Goddu, Director

Marcia Chappell

New England Program in Teacher Education
Pettee Brook Offices, Durham, N. H.

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ORGANIZING A REGIONAL OFFICE RESOURCE CENTER

FOR EDUCATION PERSONNEL

I. Introduction

A Resource Center is many things to each person one talks to. It has been described as:

(1) Information Center

- a place to access, collect, store and retrieve information

(2) Materials Center

- a place where books, curriculum materials, reference materials are acquired, stored, made and distributed from

(3) Media Center

- a place where equipment and films are acquired, stored or distributed from

(4) Teacher Center

- a place where training programs, curriculum development and social events are provided for teachers

(5) Specialized Center

- a place where sets of materials and approaches are developed, disseminated and catalogued

(6) Professional Center

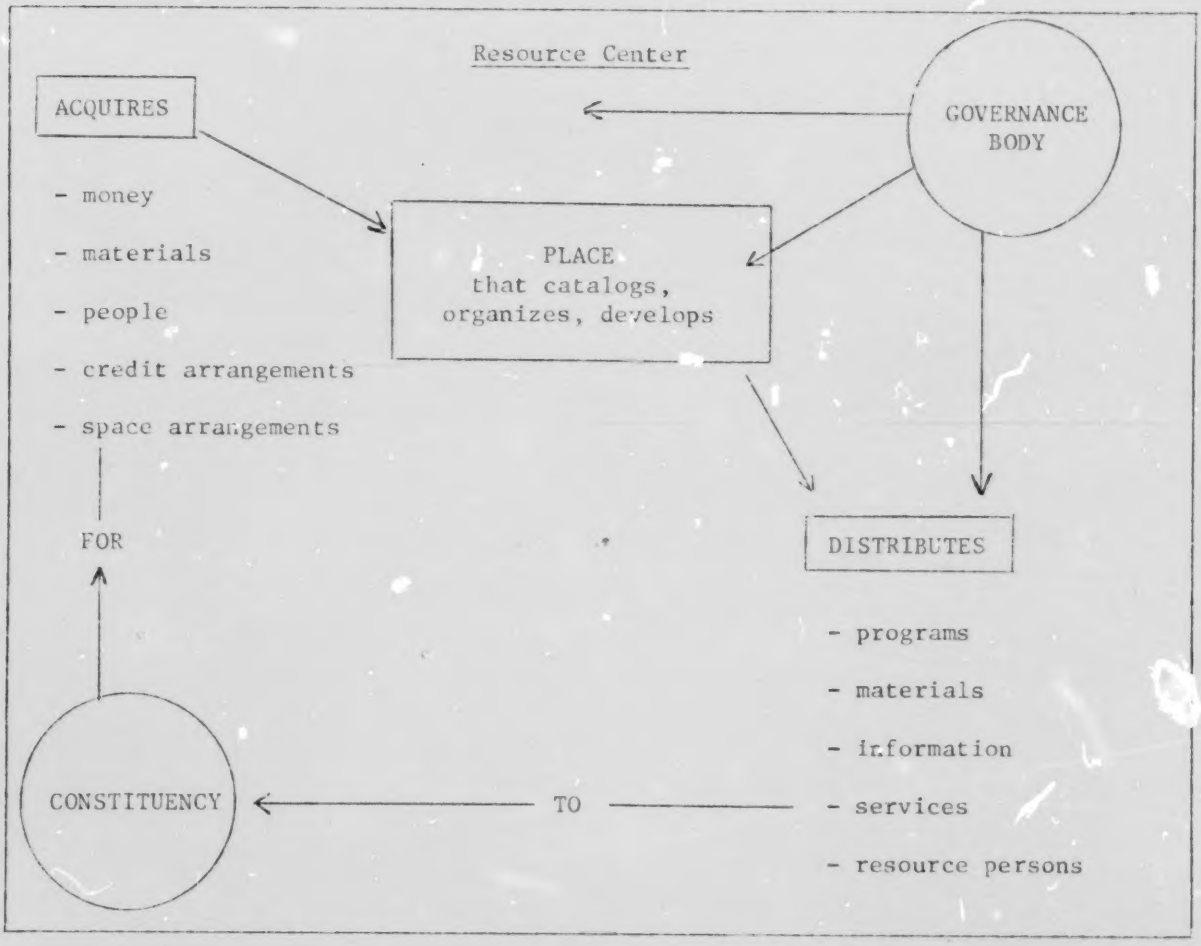
- a place with a professional library and credit granting course offerings

(7) Collaborative

- a place where a group of people share resources, services, programs

What is common to all Resource Center ideas is that it is a place which acquires something and distributes something based on decisions made by a governance body. What is not common is the how and what of acquisition and distribution.

TABLE I



An example of a how is: need responsive center sets about acquiring and distributing in a systematic way only those things that a constituency indicates they want.

This paper describes alternative arrangements for a Resource Center that would provide the constituency of the Regional Office (all education related persons - Board members, Superintendents, Specialists, Principals, Teachers, community members) with those programs, services, information, people they indicate a need for.

II. Place

First of all, the Center is a place.

TABLE II

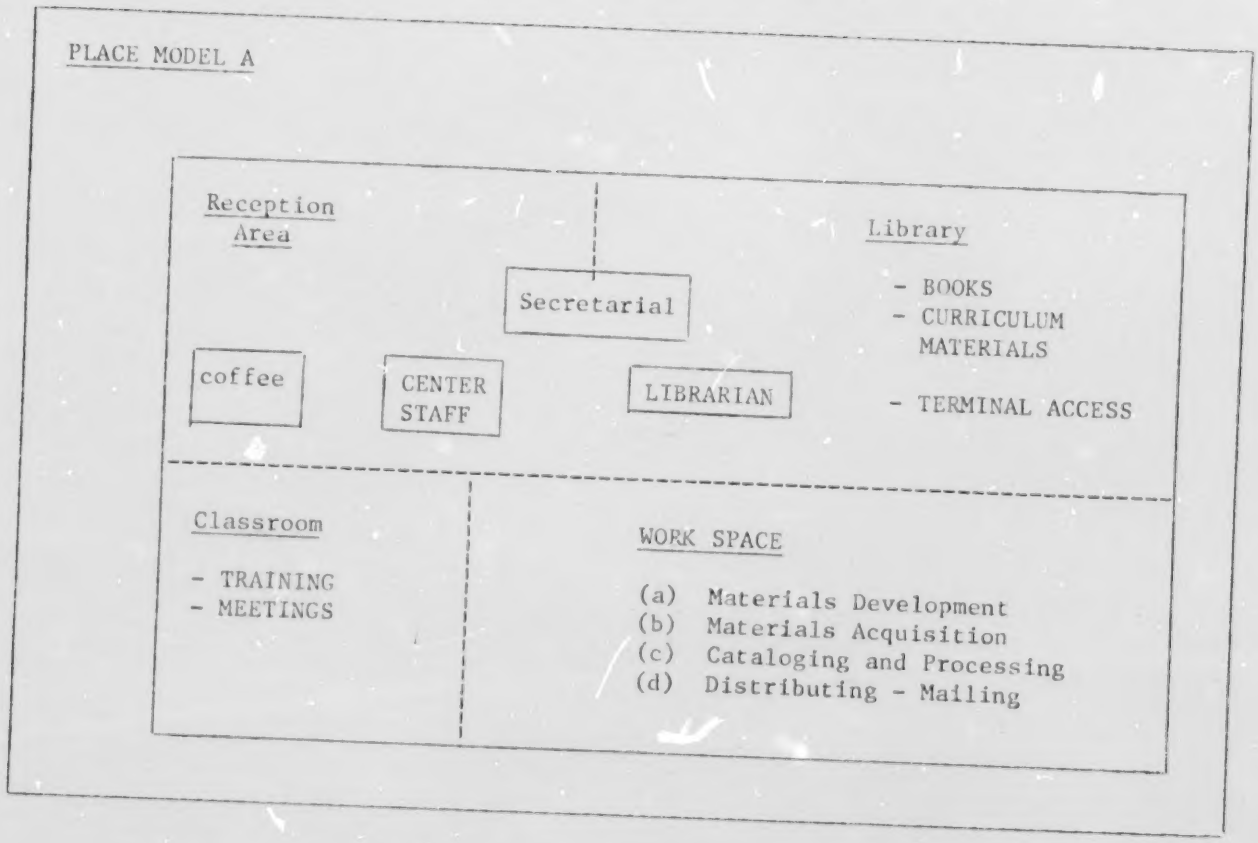


TABLE III

PLACE MODEL B

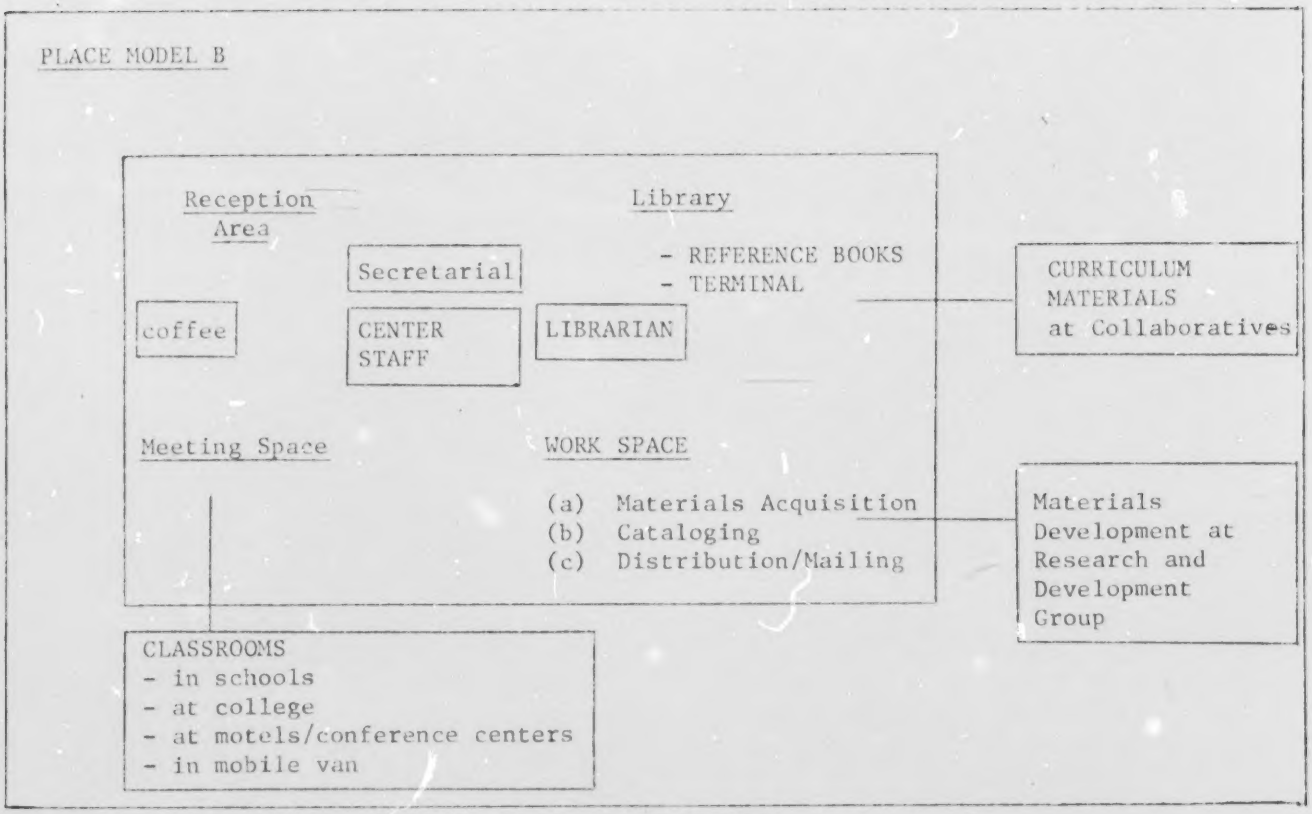
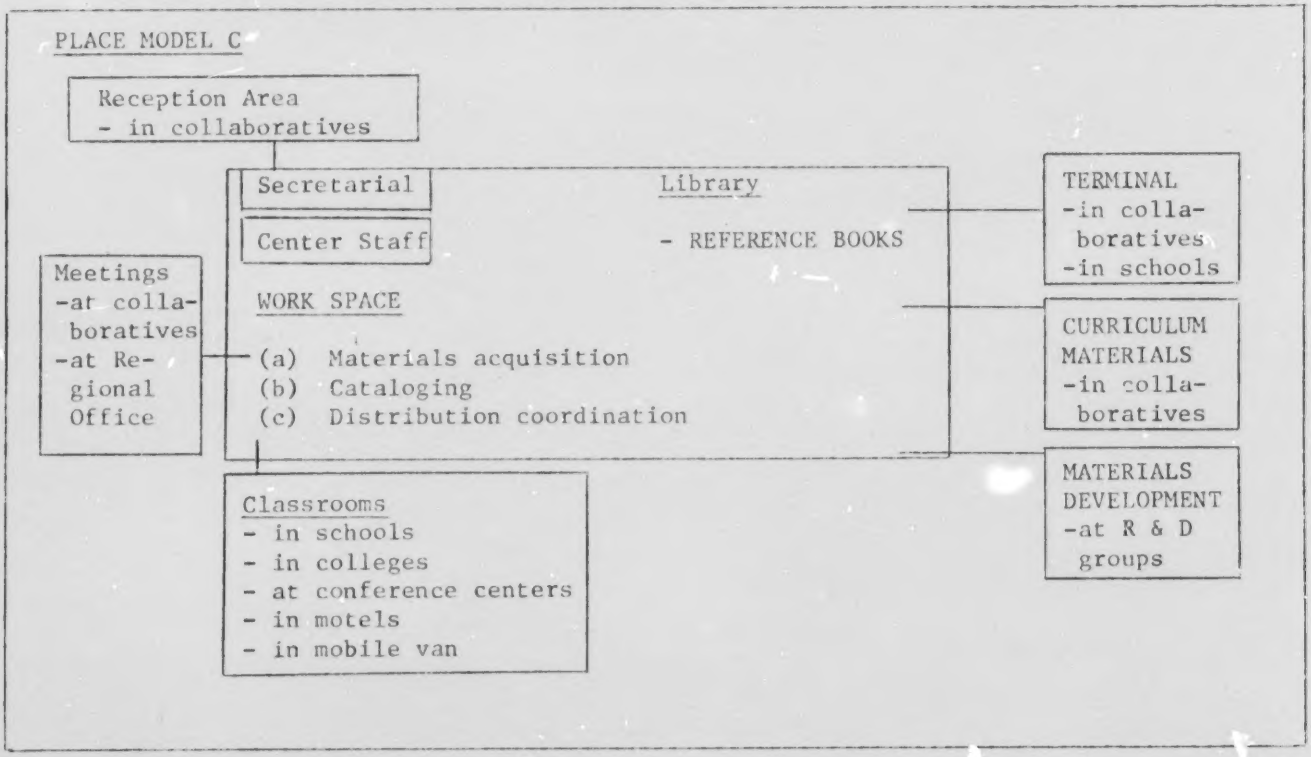


TABLE IV

PLACE MODEL C



The questions that need answering around the issue of place are:

(a) which model will encourage education personnel to come to and use the center?

(b) which model will give identity to the Resource Center as a Resource Center?

(c) which model will take advantage of existing space and agencies most effectively?

In most instances, it seems that an amended Option B format is most functional. Option A tends to duplicate existing efforts; Option C tends to diffuse activity so much that coordination and identity become major problems.

III. Program Components

WHAT

As a site designed to support the needs of persons involved in education in the Region, the Resource Center must have clearly identified areas of concern. Logically, one would expect these areas of concern to relate to Regional Office, Governance Board, and State priorities. What is to be the focus is a distinct question from how the center will acquire and distribute. What the center will help about needs to be clear. One needs to announce that the Resource Center will

(a) Work in the following areas

- 766
- 622
- OcEd (career guidance)
- etc.

and (b) Provide

- needs analyses
- materials
- information
- training
- catalog of resource persons
- listings of model programs for schools
- listings of model programs for classrooms
- listings of model programs for collaboratives

When this area of service and kind of service listing is decided and announced, then the how of delivery can be addressed.

HOW

As a site designed to support the needs of persons involved in education in the Region, the Resource Center must have a known process for acquiring and distributing those things it will work on.

Resource Centers have two kinds of acquisition processes:

(a) a process to acquire information about what the constituency's needs in a given area are;

(b) a process to acquire dollars, materials, people, and necessary arrangements for space and credits.

A decision must be made about both to assure consistency about what the Center is doing. Determining what a constituency wants or needs requires a specific needs assessment process that provides the constituency with clear choices about content and about process; content to be covered in programs, preferred process to serve needs.

TABLE V

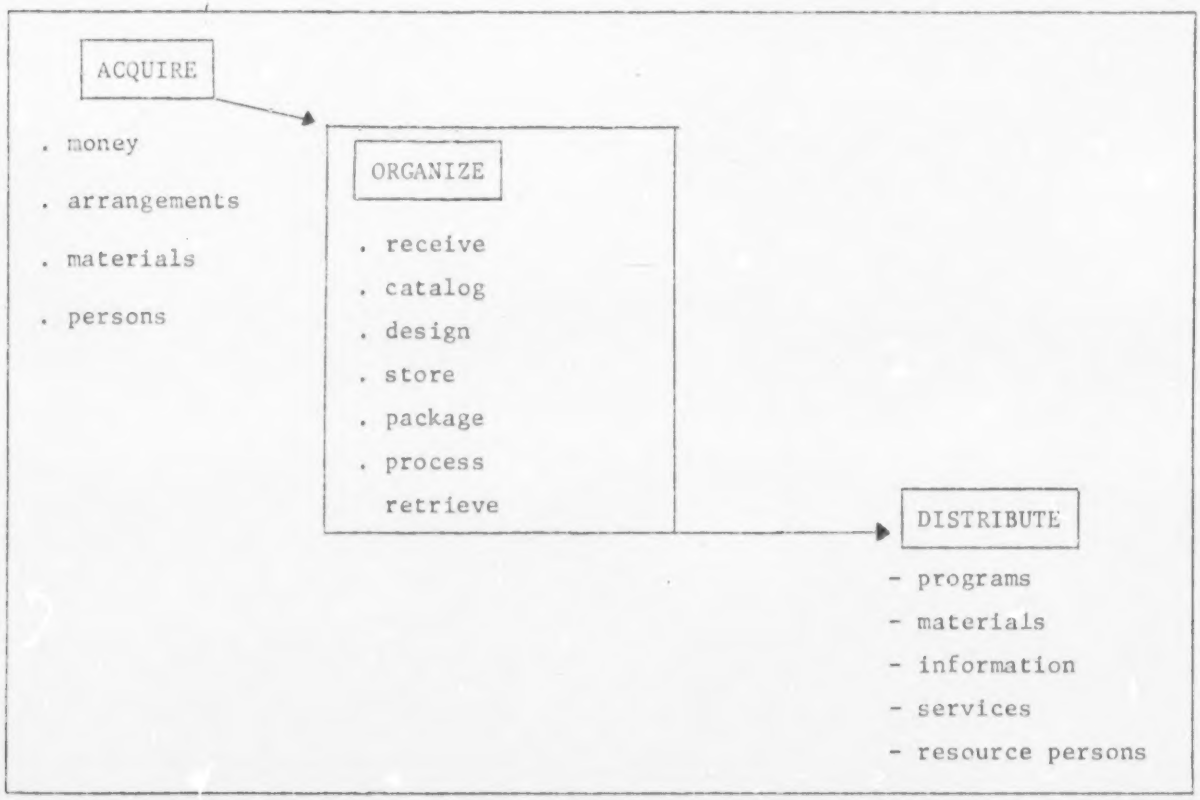
EXAMPLE OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

Content / Preferred Process (check for each item) topic: 766 areas of needs (list)	information packet (1)	resource consultant (2)	credit course at school (3)	workshop at collaborative (4)	information meeting (5)	planning session (6)	curriculum materials (7)	evaluation (8)	_____ (9)
(a) _____									
(b) _____									
(c) _____									
(d) _____									
(e) _____									
(f) _____									
(g) _____									
(h) _____									
(i) _____									
(j) _____									

The constituency needs assessment identifies what will be worked on and delivered by the resource center in each Program area. While much evidence exists that needs assessment quality affects the quality of activity of a Center, the time lag between assessment and delivery of service back to the constituency is crucial to Center survival. The time lag is directly affected by the process for acquiring resources, producing programs and distribution of service, not by the efficiency of the needs assessment. As a result, the specific steps for acquiring, organizing, and delivering programs, services, resources to the constituency must be carefully outlined.

TABLE VI

KEY PROCESSES IN RESOURCE CENTER



The key decisions one has to make about a Resource Center is how each of these key processes will be delivered and by whom.

MONEY

The key purpose of the governance Board should be to identify the cost for services and the sources for financing the effort. Most effective Resource Centers use multiple funding strategies with dollars coming in from federal, state, local and private sources. Overdependence on any one source usually leads to elimination or at least difficulty in provision of a service. A Program Budgeting approach allows for allocation of income to each program; care should be taken to allocate to each program center program development, rent, financial control, governance, and evaluation costs.

TABLE VII

Financing Options Available:

(A) Grant from funding source(s)

(B) Contract with agency or group of agencies

(C) Fee charge for each service

(D) Basic membership fee

(E) Line item appropriation

RESOURCE FILES

The basic commodity that a Resource Center connects a constituency to is resources: people, materials, processes. Most effective Resource Centers control the resources by organizing them into catalogs or listings. A Library is a catalog of books. A Curriculum Center is a catalog of materials. A Media Center is a catalog of equipment. Similar highly visible places to catalog people and processes must be visible at the Center. Creation of a Talent Bank is an example of a Resource People Catalog or Inventory. Creation of a Program Development Inventory is an example of a Processes Catalog. Effective centers have clearly defined places where a constituent can find out what resources exist. Putting these catalogs on computer storage increases the speed such information can be distributed to those having remote access terminals. One would expect a Resource Center to have:

(a) Catalogs of Resources
- Books
- Materials
- Persons
- Processes
- Programs
- Agencies
- Services

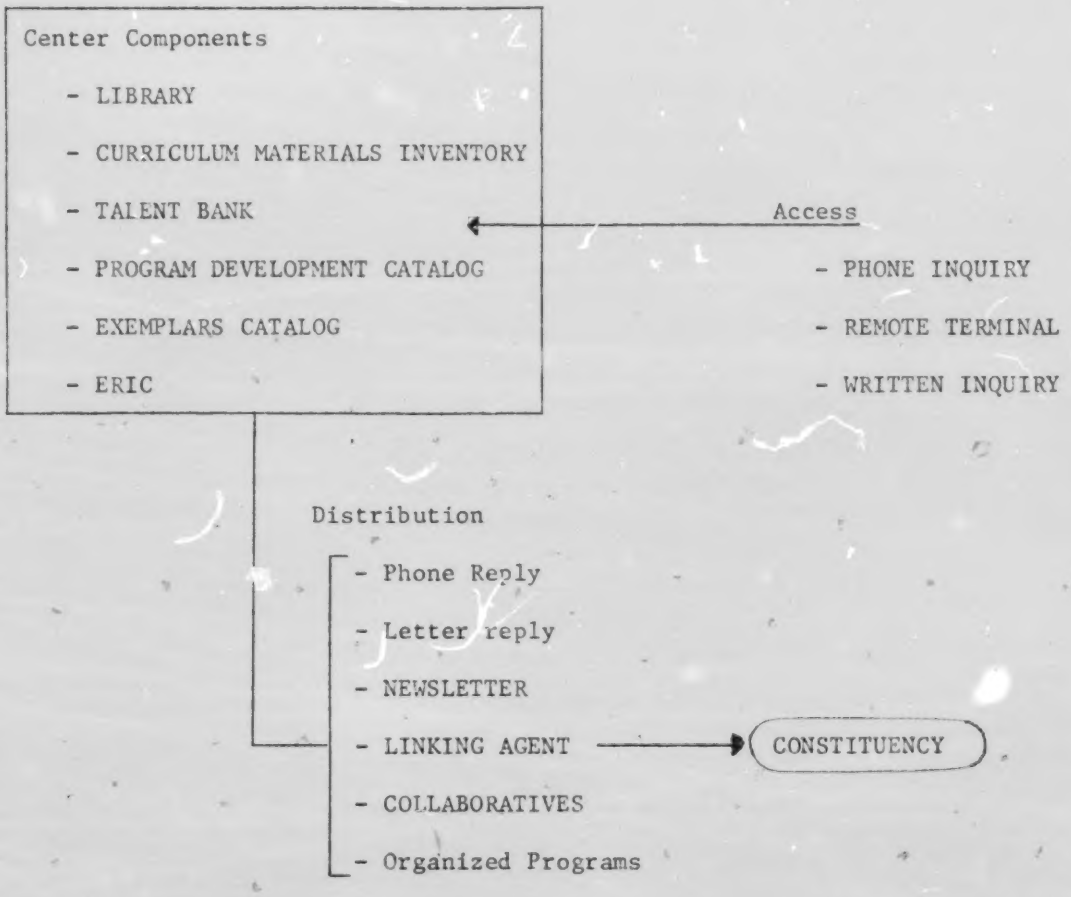
(b) Samples of Resource Materials

(c) Information Distribution Mechanisms

One would expect that someone at the Center would be responsible for maintaining and updating the Catalogs, the Samples, the Information Distribution Mechanisms.

TABLE VIII

RESOURCE CENTER AS INFORMATION SOURCE



While some of the Center Components could be housed in different places such as at certain collaboratives, constituents need to be encouraged to access the Center itself for resource information. Center distributed information should have a clearly identifiable center logo and return address on it.

TRAINING PROGRAMS

Resource Centers respond to identified needs by providing workshops, planning sessions, courses, and meetings. More important than the type of training program provided may be the level of response provided. Constituents needs often are of different types:

(1) awareness

(2) informational

(3) technique development

(4) materials development

(5) evaluative

(6) exploration of alternatives

It may be more useful to describe a Resource Center as providing:

(1) meetings and workshops that are
AWARENESS SESSIONS
INFORMATION SESSIONS

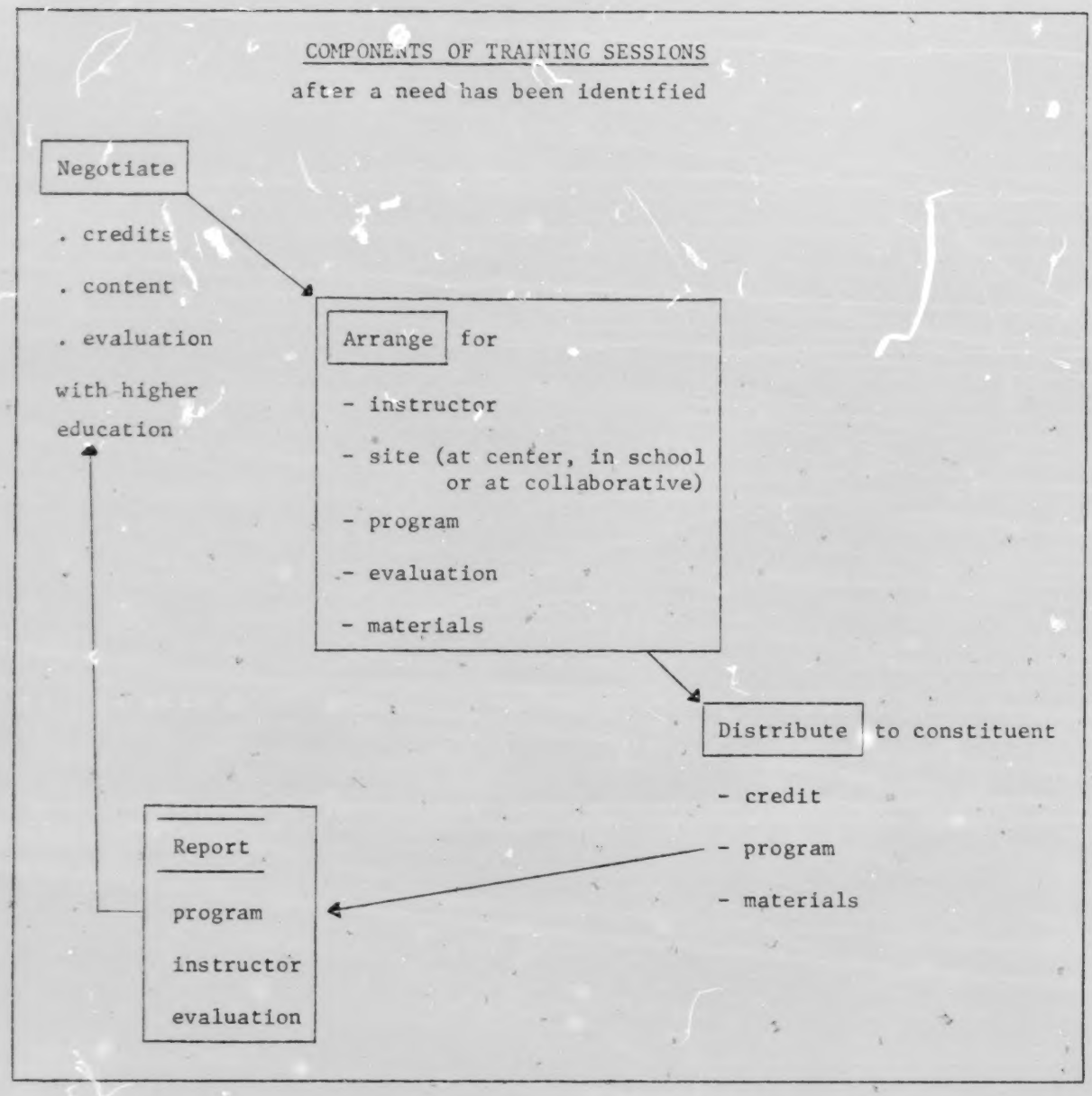
(2) workshops and courses that are
TECHNIQUES DEVELOPMENT
MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT
EXPLORATION OF ALTERNATIVES

(3) planning sessions that are
EVALUATIVE

Then negotiation (1) for site and credit arrangements with higher education institutions would be limited to techniques, materials and exploration sessions, (2) with collaboratives would be limited to arrangements for consolidating participants in a given site, and (3) with specialist units would be limited to evaluative, awareness and informational sessions.

Where a session would take place (at a collaborative in a school) would be distinct from credit and content of a session which would have been negotiated in advance.

TABLE IX


COMPONENTS OF TRAINING SESSIONS
after a need has been identified
Negotiate
. credits
. content
. evaluation
with higher education
Arrange for
- instructor
- site (at center, in school or at collaborative)
- program
- evaluation
- materials
Distribute to constituent
- credit
- program
- materials
Report
program
instructor
evaluation

IV. Governance

If the Regional Office has as a goal to design a Resource Center that serves all education constituencies, the Governing Body for the Center should include representatives from all affected constituencies:

- Boards
- Superintendents
- Specialists
- Principals
- Teachers
- Collaboratives
- Regional Office itself

The chairperson should be elected by the group. More importantly, the domain of the Governance Board should be all of the operations of the Resource Center including approval of program, selection, hiring and firing of staff, and evaluation of programs and operations. The Governance Board should establish sub-committees for each Program area to assure that needs assessment preceeds program design and that program delivery is efficient and site specific.

A governance concern related to federal legislation is the need to keep the Center Governance Board distinct from yet related to developing Teacher Centers which must have a majority of teachers on their governing bodies. The Resource Center Governing Board has a broader purpose and thus should not be absorbed into or limited to Teacher Center kinds of programs.

V. Conclusion

The decision the Regional Office faces is what to put into a Regional Resource Center.

The following components seem essential:

(1) acquire

- dollars
- credit arrangements with state colleges
- resource people
- resource materials

(2) organize

- governance structure
- priority programs
- needs assessment of constituents

(3) develop Center with

- reception area
- library
- catalogs
- curriculum materials
- computer access
- meeting space
- work space
- media center
- sites

(4) provide constituents with

- access to catalogs
- linking agent
- access to computer
- access to training

(5) deliver

- programs
- services
- information
- resource persons
- credit as needed

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